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## Honorary Doctor of Laws

### The Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing

Citation written and delivered by Professor WANG Guiguo

Pro-Chancellor:

When we visited Mr Jasper Tsang Yok-sing, we found a man in his sixties with a lean countenance and a gentlemanly demeanour. He talked freely with us about his past, sometimes with quiet confidence and sometimes with passionate eloquence. These are qualities he has shown through all the ups and downs of his political career, which he has weathered calmly and imperturbably.

Mr Tsang was born in Guangzhou and came to live in Hong Kong with his parents when he was two years old. His father was employed as a clerk with the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, while his mother was a housewife who devoted herself to the well-being of her husband and children. Because of the education he had received within the family, Mr Tsang developed a strong interest in classical Chinese literature while he was still a small child and acquired a solid knowledge of the Chinese classics. He also benefited greatly from the wisdom of the ancient sages, who provided him with clear guidelines for his future life. After he entered St Paul's College, he came under the influence of the school's western liberal policies, and established a literary society, the Bell of Enlightenment. The name was taken from a sentence in the *Analects*: "The country has long strayed from the way of righteousness; Heaven has ordained Confucius to be the Bell of Enlightenment." The society had an independent editorial board whose publications provided a platform for young people to express their views and criticise the wrongs of contemporary society.

In the 1960s, Hong Kong was relatively isolated from mainland China and its young people were generally quite ignorant of modern Chinese history. Mr Tsang, however, had developed a consuming interest in the history of the country by the time he returned to Guangzhou in 1966 with his family to visit relatives and friends for the first time. He was greatly impressed by the honesty and simplicity that generally marked the Guangzhou people and found the younger generation there full of confidence in their country and with high aspirations for it. When Mr Tsang returned

to Hong Kong, he related to his friends his experiences on the mainland with great delight, saying, “I have found my fatherland.” During that visit he also learned the story of a mainland scientist, Qian Xuesen, whose example motivated him to take up the study of science in the service of his country. Events, however, took an unexpected turn with the eruption of the disastrous 10-year Cultural Revolution, which seemed to close the door on Mr Tsang’s ambition to serve China. But he opened another door for himself when he decided to contribute to society by devoting himself wholeheartedly to the promotion of education.

In 1968, Mr Tsang graduated from the University of Hong Kong with a first-class honours degree in mathematics and took up teaching at Pui Kiu Middle School. Thus began his 28-year-long career in education, during which time he enabled generations of talented students to contribute to Hong Kong. For Mr Tsang, a career must always be pursued with passion and with a single-minded determination to achieve success. Although teaching was not his first choice, he was determined to pursue this profession to the best of his ability. That involved Mr Tsang devoting time outside the classroom to his own professional development. To that end, he embarked on a master’s degree course in education at the University of Hong Kong, receiving his degree in 1983. Two years later, he was appointed principal of Pui Kiu Middle School. He loved education and in discharging his educational duties the unparalleled value of education came fully home to him. He also came to realise, through his work as head of a school, that tolerance and cooperation are essential qualities for a good leader.

While serving as a teacher at Pui Kiu, Mr Tsang helped Mr Ng Hong-mun, then its Principal and a member of the Basic Law Consultative Committee, to gather opinions from educational circles for consideration by the Basic Law Drafting Committee. This was the starting-point of a long political career, which has culminated in his becoming the elder statesman he is today.

In 1992, together with friends, he established the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB), of which he was the founding chairman. In the years since Hong Kong reverted back to China, he has served as a member of the Provisional Legislative Council (1997–1998), a member of the Executive Council (2002–2008), and a member of the Legislative Council (2008 to today). In 2008, he was elected President of the 4th Legislative Council of Hong Kong. Mr Tsang has also served in numerous public positions, notably as member of the Commission on Strategic Development,

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board member of the Airport Authority Hong Kong, member of the ICAC Complaints Committee, and member of the Disaster Relief Fund Advisory Committee.

When Heaven is about to confer some great responsibility on a man, it subjects him to great mental stress as well as hard physical endeavour. He will go hungry and suffer mental deprivation, and his undertakings will be confounded. All this will help to strengthen his resolve, build his fortitude, and develop his abilities. Mr Tsang's successful career is no exception to this rule. In 1995, he ran for the Legislative Council for the first time, but was unsuccessful. In 2003, following DAB's setback in the District Council elections, he resolutely accepted personal responsibility for the failure and resigned his chairmanship. He has learned, through all the ebb and flow of life, to remain optimistic in the face of crises and to regard setbacks as springboards to greater achievement. Selflessly, he continues to play a prominent role in Hong Kong's political development.

As globalisation gathers pace, the bond between Hong Kong and the mainland grows ever stronger, and exchanges between them are bound to increase. With this in mind, Mr Tsang, together with his DAB colleagues, has time and again offered the government his advice, stressing the need for comprehensive cooperative ties with the mainland and proposing a permanent mechanism with wide powers and multiple responsibilities to formulate and coordinate major joint projects. He has led a number of delegations of Legislative Councillors on visits to the mainland for the study of pressing social issues and the promotion of exchanges in various matters. He remains convinced that better communication between Hong Kong and the mainland is the only way to develop a win-win model of cooperation and make the "one country, two systems" principle work despite the differences between the two.

Affable and modest, Mr Tsang is generous with no ambition for either fame or wealth. He is, moreover, a man of strong principle, who stands up for what he believes in. In this we can see his lofty personality, which is mellow, yet strong and dynamic, like the Yan Zhenqing style of calligraphy that he is particularly fond of.

Pro-Chancellor, it is an honour and a privilege to present to you on behalf of the City University of Hong Kong Mr Jasper Tsang Yok-sing, President of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong, for the conferment of the degree of Honorary Doctor of Laws.